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Test Driving CD-ROMS - Reviews of CD-ROM Products

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TestDriving CD-ROMS — Reviews of CD-ROM Products

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Darwin — multimedia CD-ROM — Second Edition
ISBN 1-889175013 — \$49.95 — Lightbinders, Inc.
<http://libin.com>; <darwin@libin.com>

Reviewed by **Martha S. Felts** (Catalog Librarian, College of Charleston, SC) <feltsm@cofc.edu>
and **Mitchell W. Colgan** (Associate Professor, Geology, College of Charleston, SC) <mcolgan@loki.cofc.edu>

Librarian: Lightbinders' second edition of "**Darwin**," their CD-ROM product, is a jewel. On one compact disc compatible with Macintosh, Unix and Windows computers may be found all of **Charles Darwin's** major works, including *The Origin of the Species*, *The Descent of Man*, and *The Voyage of the Beagle*. To these works Lightbinders added five less well-known books by Darwin, including *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, *On the Various Contrivances by which British and Foreign Orchids are Fertilised by Insects*, and 23 short papers. To this compilation is then added *The Triumph of the Darwinian Method* by Michael Ghiselin along with a biographical dictionary, a chronology, and an extensive Darwin bibliography. "**Darwin**" is comprehensive and thoughtfully compiled.

Professor: The complete *Monograph on the Sub-Class Cirripedia*, the important but not widely read study of barnacles, is included on the Darwin disc. Most helpful is M. T. Ghiselin's introduction to this work that places the formidable, 1200 page monograph in its historic and scientific context. Also included is *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs*, which reveals Darwin's observational and deductive gifts. This work contradicted the widely held theories of his friend **Charles Lyell** on reef formation and atoll development. Modern methods have since verified Darwin's ideas on atoll formation. This work, presented in its entirety on the compact disc, is still a valuable reference for those studying reefs today. Ghiselin provides useful introductory material for the coral reef book.

The short papers give insight into Darwin's methods and thoughts. Included are works such as Darwin's correspondence with his mentor, the **Rev. Henslow**, which sheds light on how Darwin's contemporaries reacted to his findings. The paper that forced Darwin to write the *Origin of the Species* is included on the CD. The paper "On the Tendency of Species to Form Varieties; and On the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection," written by Darwin and Wallace and presented to the **Linnean Society** by Lyell and Hooker, is also included. An early obscure paper of 1837 entitled "On the Formation of Mould" connects Darwin's early work to his final book of 1881 entitled *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits*. These are only 3 of the 23 short papers that Darwin researchers will enjoy reading. Most missed from the collection is Darwin's autobiography.

I have used the first edition of this compact disc many times, but the interface was awkward. In the five years since the release of the first edition of "**Darwin**," the editors have improved the design and expanded the contents.

Librarian: "**Darwin**" is seamlessly put together. Tables of contents run along the left frame of each screen, making it easy to move within the text of each work. The browser function enables the user to find the occurrences of terms or names in a single text or within the scope of the entire compact disc. One can then move

through the selected text from occurrence to occurrence of the specified term. Hypertext links to the biographical dictionary enable the user to quickly identify people of importance in Darwin's life. The numerous illustrations, maps, drawings, and photographs (later additions) may be enlarged for better viewing. I was particularly fond of the buttons located under some illustrations enabling the listener to hear the calls of the Galapagos birds.

Professor: I found that the design of the compact disc enabled me to quickly research Darwin-related questions. Recently I used the disc to construct several lectures on Darwin and the Galapagos, and I liked the ease with which I could search the *Origin* and the *Voyage*. I found the CD especially useful as it provided me with materials I had not read previously. In addition, the hyperlinks enabled easy exploration of new topics that arose in the course of researching the main topic.

Librarian: Having all of Charles Darwin's works so accessible on one disc is convenient, and the whole product is strengthened by the several additions. The Darwin bibliography lists 177 references to Darwin's works and 1335 references to secondary works. The biographical dictionary identifies the important people in Darwin's life and research and does so in a succinct and approachable format. Many of the biographical clips are enhanced by the addition of portraits of the subjects. The short video of **Down Home**, Darwin's home in England, is quite appealing, as it makes immediate the setting where Darwin lived and worked and did so much of his writing.

Professor: I would not hesitate to suggest to my students that they use this CD to research a wide variety of subjects. The disc is an important reference for those interested in the study of the history of the philosophy of science as well as those studying topics in biology and geology. "**Darwin**" is a valuable reference tool that should be in every college library.

Librarian: "**Darwin**" would be a useful tool both for the beginning Darwin student and for the experienced Darwin researcher. Its well done and attractive format, its comprehensiveness, and its reasonable price make it a best buy for an academic library or for a large public library.

The Encyclopaedia of Mathematics — CD-ROM — Kluwer Academic Publishers — \$235 standalone; \$1775 network version

Reviewed by **James Williams III** (College of Charleston)
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The print version of *The Encyclopaedia of Mathematics*, published by Kluwer Academic (1988-1993, \$1990), is an excellent mathematics resource. This 10-volume set is designed for use by graduate students, instructors, mathematicians and scientists. Derived from the 5-volume *Soviet Mathematical Encyclopaedia*, this reference work has been translated, expanded and updated to contain close to 7,000 articles covering everything from computational theories to probabilities, mathematical concepts and terms. "Appropriate for special libraries and medium to large university collections, there is little else like this work in the mathematical reference literature" (*American Reference Books Annual*, 1990, p. 740).

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Book Pricing Update — One Publisher's Treatment of Science Textbooks Over a Ten-Year Period

by **Abby Brothers** (New Titles Account Coordinator, Blackwell's) <Abby.Brothers@Blackwell.com>

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With the fiscal yearend close at hand, Collection Development and Acquisitions Librarians are now facing the daunting tasks of evaluating budgets and analyzing trends in scholarly publishing. While it is important to identify publishing trends as a whole, consideration of an individual publisher's response to the market can offer valuable insight. Of the most distinguished university presses, **Cambridge University Press**, provides a particularly useful case study. Blackwell's treated 1,177 Cambridge titles on Approval for the 1997 calendar year, superseded only by sci-tech publisher **Springer-Verlag**, with 1,257 titles, and the trade publisher **Routledge**, with 1,202 titles. A ten-year look at Cambridge titles from 1988 through 1997 reveals a few interesting trends.

With the popularity of academic disciplines shifting from year to year, a similar degree of fluctuation in Cambridge's coverage over ten years might be expected. Surprisingly, however, it maintained remarkable consistency in its broad-level treatment of subjects. Its two

largest areas of concentration over the ten years under consideration were the LC Q classification (Natural Sciences) and the LC P classification (Languages and Literature). In 1988, 23% of its titles fell within the LC Q class and 16% fell within the P class. Over ten years Cambridge's average distribution across the Q and P classes was 24% and 18% respectively, and by 1997, 25% of its titles fell within the Q class and 17% fell within the P class. Although only 9% of all university press titles fell within the LC Q class, 29% of those were contributed by Cambridge, that is, about 2,000 of 6,670 titles!

If we look within Cambridge science titles we find an increasing focus on textbooks over ten years, and a significant increase in the average list price of these titles. In 1988, only 26% of Cambridge Q class titles were textbooks, as compared with 50% in 1997. The average price of the cloth editions of these titles rose considerably during this period. In 1988, science textbooks averaged \$57.64, and in 1997 they averaged

\$82.35: a 43% increase. Even without factoring inflation into these figures, this increase is high when compared with Cambridge science titles in general which saw only a 28% price increase during the same time frame. By 1997 escalating prices in Cambridge science textbooks put the \$82.35 average list price for these titles 13% ahead of the average list price of \$72.87 for Cambridge science titles in general.

How has the detailed-level subject content of Cambridge science textbooks changed over ten years? In 1988, most of the science textbooks were distributed fairly evenly among the various disciplines, with mathematics and physics accounting for 15 titles, or about 54% of all science textbooks. By 1997, mathematics and physics textbooks jumped to 86 titles or about 73% of science textbooks. Algebra titles clearly outnumbered other math fields, while math physics titles such as *The Geometry of Physics*, dominated the physics textbooks. Although Cambridge does not publish a great deal in computer science, it is interesting to note that in 1988 only 2% of these titles were treated as textbooks. In 1996, only 1.5%

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So how do you top a source like this one? That's right. You place it on CD-ROM.

The CD-ROM (\$235 stand alone version, \$1,775 network) includes not only the text and diagrams from the original, but additionally includes animation and 3D graphics. This version also includes the first of 3 planned supplements, the 1997 Supplement I, which brings the article count to nearly 7,600. Access to these articles is just a few keystrokes away in most cases. The CD uses a "DynaText" Browser which displays two "collections," the *Encyclopaedia of Mathematics* and the DynaText Browser Documentation. The *Encyclopaedia* is divided into three categories or "books": the entries, the index and the guide. The entries are arranged alphabetically and contain the article text with links to the animation and graphics. The index provides information such as a list of authors or article titles. The guide helps the user understand how the search engine works and how the information is structured. The CD is fairly easy to use and the informational content is logically laid out and easy to follow. However, the user will be able to save time, energy and use the CD more effectively if he or she reads the guide first.

The DynaText browser allows standard searching, using either the find box at the bottom of the screen or the search form. In addition to standard searching, the search form allows Boolean, proximity, special characters, wild-cards, context-sensitive searches and even provides a search history. The organized architecture of this CD however, presents certain search limitations. Due to the methods used to create

the CD, certain headings, illustrations and equations cannot be found using the find feature because they are not actually part of the text, but they can be found easily by browsing the alphabetical entry list under the first few letters of the subject. For example, one can find "fundamental forms of surface" by quickly browsing the entries under the letter "f", then the letters "fu" instead of performing a find search on "fundamental forms of surface". Many of the features of this browser can even be customized to specific user preferences. The help screens are easily accessible throughout the program and provide adequate support in easy-to-understand terms. In fact, if you understand the mathematical text of the *Encyclopedia*, the help screens are a "piece of cake." The real "power" of this CD is displayed by using the hypertext links contained within the articles. One can easily leap from information on a theory to background information on the theorist without pulling and searching through multiple volumes. Many of the terms used within the articles are linked to definitions which enhance understanding. This is extremely beneficial in the case of complex theories and problems. But most impressive is the inclusion of intriguing animation and 3D graphics.

These features give the user a perspective that simply cannot be delivered in a paper source. The user becomes completely interactive with the source by being able to manipulate 3D images, change their color and texture and even set them into motion. And within some articles, the user can view a short animated demonstration or movie of a principle or concept like the "Archimedean Spiral." This is a great use of the technology. Overall, the *Encyclopaedia of Mathematics* is a great resource made better by CD-ROM and a must for serious mathematical study. 